

Vol. CXCVIII No. 5157

January 31 1940

Charivaria

"THE true dictator," we are told, "is a man who knows his own limitations." And calls them somebody else's.

War is a great leveller. Few people nowadays can tell exactly which side of their bread is buttered.

o o

o o

Busmen of the London Passenger Transport Board are attending classes for knitting comforts for the men at the Front. Any soldier receiving a Balaclava helmet, very full inside and little room on top, will now know where it comes from

"Snails declared war on us ages ago," says a gardener. One cannot help but admire their neat solution to the billeting problem.

o o

An architect says that basement offices are unhealthy. Although it must be excellent exercise for City men to kick unwanted travellers upstairs.

o o

Smoking is said to be a remedy for some varieties of nervous complaints. It is a very old-established cure for kippers.

o o

Exclusive

"BACK DOOR OF HEAVEN"
"NO ADMITTANCE WITHOUT A GAS MASK."
Posters outside Cinema.

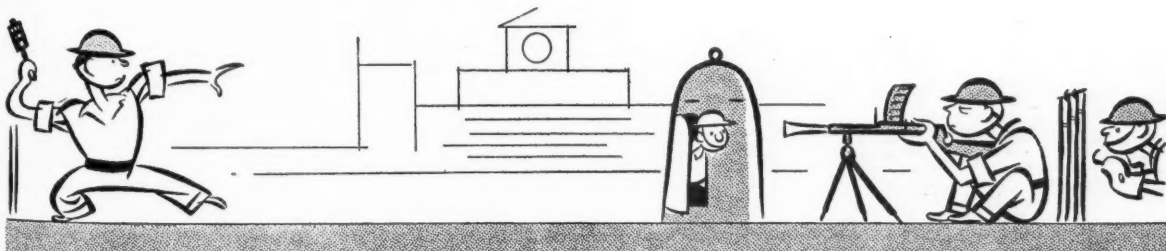
o o

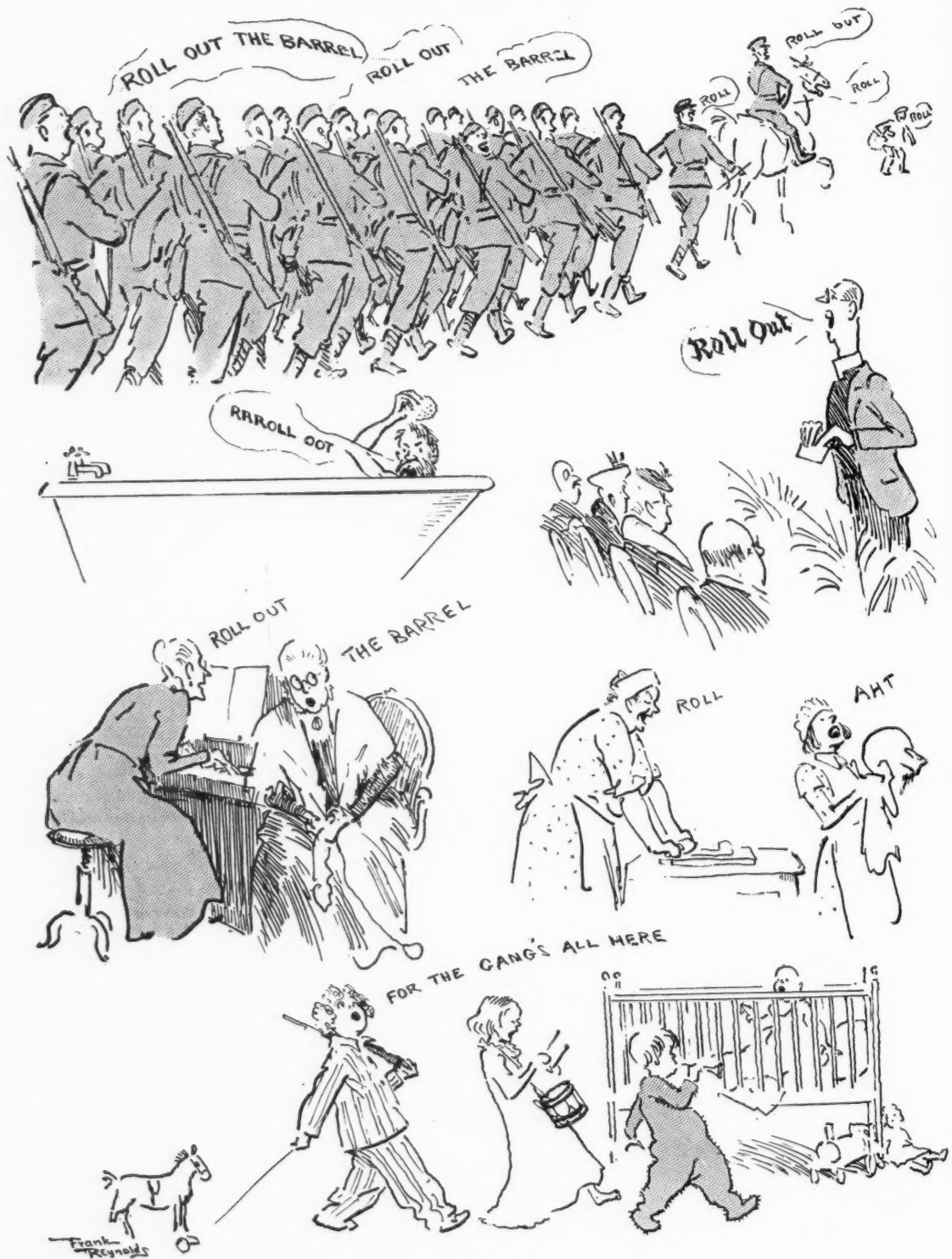
"Run, Rabbit, Run"

"The Committee has suggested that the price of rabbits should be maintained at a satisfactory level by arranging for the freezing of surplus rabbits in Winter for release in Summer."

"The Fruit-Grower."

A cricket enthusiast wants to know when Test Matches with Australia will be resumed. Patience, patience! One war at a time.





UNITY

Winning the War

AS my suggestions for painlessly pursuing the war have not been received by the Inventions Department of the War Office with anything like the wild scenes of enthusiasm that I had anticipated—have not, in truth, been received at all—I am compelled to make them public here, realising full well that by so doing I am severely jeopardising their chance of remaining secret and putting them at the disposal of more far-sighted if less gentlemanly governments. This is the bitter course so often forced upon those whose genius is not recognised in their own time. It is a fact that I have not received a single coherent reply to my queries with regard to what steps are being taken to ensure victory by means of optical illusions, sleight-of-hand, bribery, yogi, sex-appeal, auto-suggestion, superstition, low cunning, inexplicable or uncalled-for behaviour and all the innumerable little ways by which one normally gets the better of one's fellow-beings.

It is useless to explain to me that my ideas are too fanciful and that in the long run battle-drill is always best. The too-fanciful theories of to-day are always the hard facts of to-morrow and the museum-pieces of the day after that. The Finns are not afraid to be fanciful. Only the other day large numbers of Russians were routed by a loud-speaker which told them, presumably without the usual catch in its voice, that if they moved another step it would shoot them dead. This is obviously the most effective as well as the most sanitary way of waging war. It is what has led me to urge for the immediate manufacture of gramophone records which can be amplified at strategic points along the Western Front. Suggested subjects include: Machine-gun fire, advancing aircraft, soporific lullabys, charging buffaloes, reconnaissance flights of mosquitoes, commands to retreat or stand on the head and frightfully exciting short stories which compel the listener to wait for the end and so get taken by surprise.

Nor, I have pointed out, must we shrink from giving our opponents the Willies. "I'll fight anything human," says the hero of innumerable novels when confronted by what he mistakenly believes to be some "thing." It is up to us to confront the enemy with "things," if necessary lowering them by parachute. Circus freaks and ghosts must be urged to come forward and offer their services. We must not shut our eyes to the advantages of midget

warfare or to the startling properties inherent in the action of sawing women in half. We must not leave out of our calculations fakirs who can pulverise people with the evil eye, throw their weight about after being buried alive and elevate themselves above the Siegfried Line if necessary. We must realise the advantages of a quick round of bathing belles or a volley of human cannon-balls. All these measures should cause our adversaries to weaken at the knees and give up trying, provided they are put across with sufficient feeling.

My own particular pamphlets have also been cast aside without ceremony, although I must confess I cannot myself think of any ceremony which would be particularly suitable. All the same I believe their effect would have been staggering. Here is a typical example:

Dear Germans,—We haven't the faintest idea what our war aims are, so surrender now to avoid disappointment and get the best terms before we've had time to think of anything fruity.

Or perhaps:

Honestly now, can you deny that it would be much more fun not having this war?

Or even:

Here is some strawberry jam and a few magazines we thought might amuse you during the weary months of waiting for our revered leaders to realise that we are not doing anybody any good carrying on in this shocking way.

This last is particularly cunning as it establishes a bond which may lead to invitations to dinner, followed either by mutual fondness which precludes any possibility of continuing as enemies or mutual attempts to hand round poisoned cigarettes.

In my attempts to meet the authorities half-way I have consented to make some suggestions with regard to more painful forms of fighting, unnecessary though I consider them to be. I have demanded to know what steps are being taken to provide the Army with psychological tanks, including night-time tanks with phosphorescent faces, talking tanks, surprise tanks, and tanks in the likeness of scuttled German battleships. Moreover I have for years been urging the Admiralty to disguise all craft as icebergs, whales, floating islands, Sargasso

seas and, by way of contrast (as they say on the B.B.C. when providing us with a number indistinguishable from what came before), lighthouses, sea-serpents and sunsets. At the same time I suggested the construction of a bogus unsinkable fleet careering about confusing the issue and preferably made in miniature so as to make careless airmen think they are much higher than they really are. Furthermore, I was among the first to point out the impracticability of my own suggestion for detecting mines by means of performing seals.

I have also made a study of dealing with positions which may have to be abandoned. These may profitably be equipped with collapsible bridges, false-bottomed dressing-stations, exploding gorse-bushes, joke poplar trees, apple-pie trenches and other novelties. Not until the next war, however, is there any likelihood of anyone appreciating the wisdom of these precautions, and not until the one after that will they come to realise what I have hardly bothered to point out, namely, that in modern warfare human beings are superfluous and get in the way. The old drum-and-fife tradition dies hard, and it cannot be grasped that when war is a question of which side can hold out the longer, obviously the side is more successful which isn't there. At the outside one should need no more than a dozen super scientists disguised as cormorants and, pressing the buttons which will fire off all our guns at once, electrocute the enemy or make the Maginot Line so hot that nobody can come near it. Don't tell me that you can't do that sort of thing by pressing buttons, because I know that much harder things like launching liners and opening exhibitions have been done by this method. Sometimes in very hot weather I can even start my car by pressing a button. Meanwhile the B.E.F. must immediately be replaced by lay figures who would do the job of sitting and waiting with exemplary efficiency and discourage the enemy with their Spartan endurance and imperviousness to danger or exposure, while leaving the live army free to dig a retreat under the Channel into which the populations of England and France could be evacuated in the event of any or all of my schemes going wrong.

I think I have said enough to illustrate how an inch or two of ground might be gained during the next decade or two, which is, after all, more than is likely to be gained by any orthodox methods.

Composition

["Most of the priests still ministering in the archdiocese (of Poznan) have been ordered by the Germans to say after service a special prayer for Hitler, the text of which has been prepared at Blomberg by the District Leader Kampe."—*The Rome Correspondent of "The Times."*]

IF I had half a year to think
And tell the dreams of which I dream
If I had quantities of ink—
About enough to fill a sink—
And blotting-paper by the ream,

If I were calmer than a cow
And both Archbishops came to me
And put some ice upon my brow
And said "We are revising now
The Anglican Church Liturgy,"

If I possessed the sort of pen
So burning and so brightly tipped
That it could sear the hearts of men,
If I were sitting in a den
Of adders with my manuscript,

If I were milder than a saint,
Or drunk with wine, or raving mad,
If I were gifted with restraint
Or cared to write with crimson paint
On an asbestos writing-pad,

Not for a pound of butter hid
By Goering in a load of coal
Could I achieve when I was bid
What District Leader Kampe did
And write a prayer for Hitler's soul.
EVOE.

Radio-Persia Calling

(480-479 B.C.)

PROPAGANDISTS of the capitalist aggressors of Athens and Sparta are informing neutrals that we are at war with them. This is one more characteristic and propagandist lie. No war has been declared and the Greek incident is progressing towards a natural solution, namely, the extermination of the Greek aggressors.

It is announced from the Greek Front that our Hero-Father Xerxes has dug a canal through the Athos isthmus. This should be a strong line of defence against the Greek Imperialists, who hate our Persian freedom and democracy.

Our Beloved Xerxes, with the devoted help of our noble army, has thrown bridges across the Hellespont. This will thwart the criminal Greek scheme of invading Persia by way of the Caucasus. The Athenian White Guards are in retreat, and everywhere the liberated populations are giving our men a frenzied welcome.

Yesterday happened the greatest incident in the Greek Incident. A regiment of our Persian heroes advancing

across the Plain of Thermopylae encountered an immense army of Spartan capitalists under the command of the notorious aristocrat and White Guard Leonidas. As our men approached, it was seen that these effete Imperialists were too busy combing their hair to notice them. The effects of their surprise were overwhelming. The Greek aggressors offered only the slightest and most ineffective resistance and were slaughtered to a man.

To-day, in honour of the victory of our gallant Persian comrades against overwhelming odds on the vast open plain at Thermopylae, our Beloved Hero-Father Xerxes has awarded himself the Highest Order of the Empire, which has never been earned by anybody else.

Last night our Beloved Xerxes received a cordial message from the President of Carthage congratulating him on his glorious victory over the Spartan capitalist exploiters.

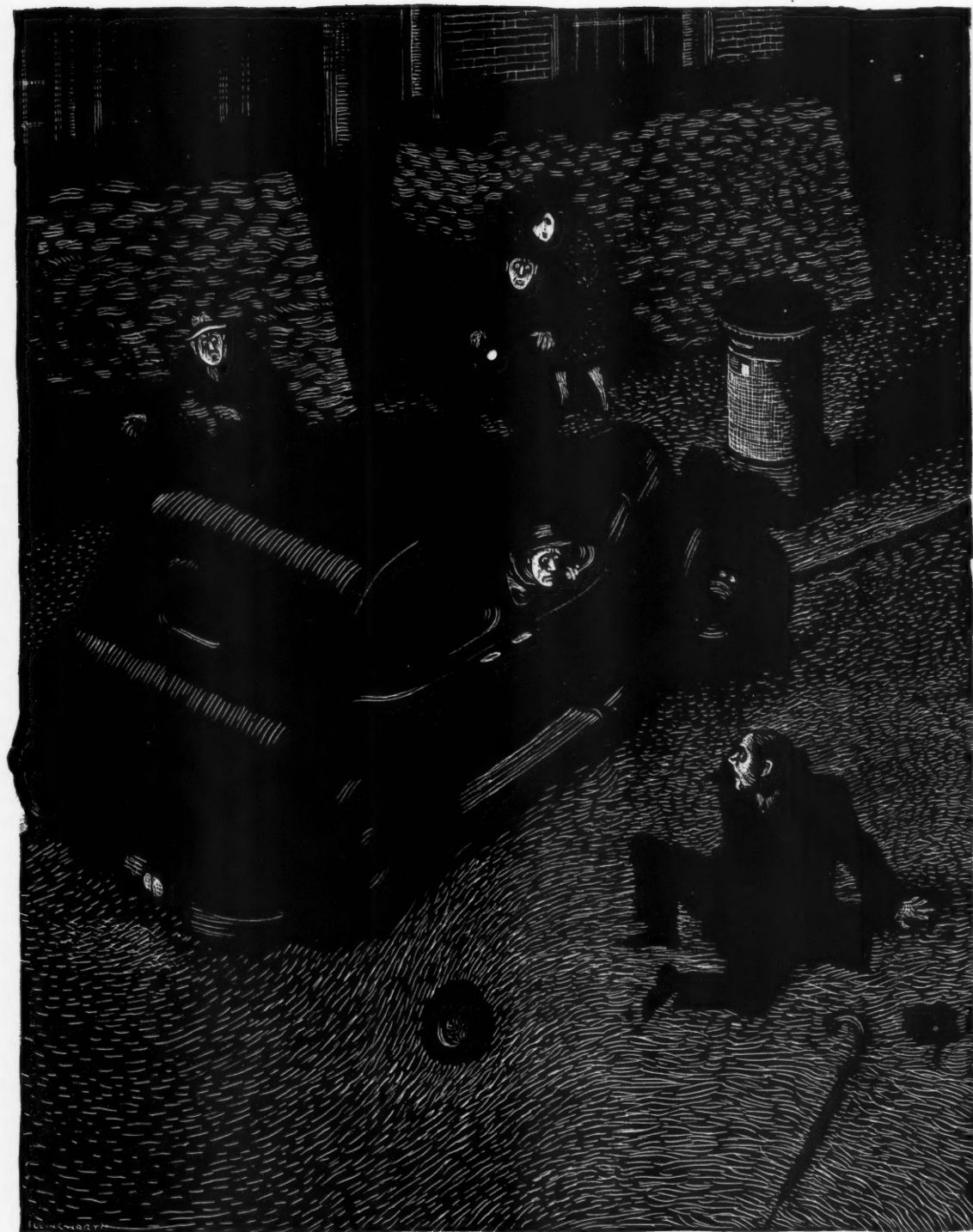
Messages from the Greek Incident Front report that Athens has been captured without a blow. Our noble troops were received with immense enthusiasm by the population, with whom they shared their rations.

The Greek Incident may now be regarded as almost closed, and it is probable that the workers of Greece will now unanimously vote for union with our democratic Persia, under our Hero-Brother, Father, and Uncle, Xerxes. A few Greek ships are still somewhere in hiding under the notorious liar and aristocrat Themistocles, but it is likely that our brave Persian sailors will shortly clear them out of their holes, after which the Greek Incident will be closed and the Athenian and Spartan oppressors, aggressors, reptiles and Egyptophiles will have been cleared from the face of the earth.

Messages from Salamis report that one of our brave Persian ships has had a skirmish with the remaining Greek trawlers under the criminal-pirate-traitor Themistocles. The capitalist exploiters were driven off; a few of our beloved sailors were killed by Hellenophile-Egyptologist treachery. Our dear Father Xerxes announces that the Greek Incident may now be regarded as almost closed, so that the greater part of our small reconnoitring expedition may now be withdrawn.

There is little to add to our last bulletin except that almost the whole of our reconnoitring force in Greece is now in process of withdrawal. A very small garrison has been left in Greece under the command of our Beloved Hero-Comrade Mardonius.

Our gallant Comrade Mardonius yesterday encountered a wandering band of Greek capitalist-Imperialist-aristocrat-White-Guard-exploiter reptiles at Plataea. The engagement was only a brush but entirely successful, our noble comrades pushing on to another position. Our Beloved Hero-Leader Xerxes has consequently decided to withdraw the last of the reconnaissance garrison platoons from Hellas, and states that the Greek Incident may now be regarded as entirely closed. Medals have been distributed to all the



THE POT AND THE KETTLE

Motorist { "I never saw you."
Pedestrian { "Well, let that be a lesson to both of us."



"It looks to me suspiciously like British propaganda."

troops, and our Beloved Xerxes has bestowed upon himself the Order of Xerxes (First Class). Indefatigable as ever, our Hero-Comrade will now devote himself to the suppression of the Hellenophile-Egyptologist sabotage by reptiles in Babylonia, where some remains of the aristocratic exploiters whom we too mercifully failed to exterminate entirely are endeavouring, though utterly in vain, to spread discontent by diabolical and reptilian lies amongst the liberated Babylonian workers.

* * * * *

P.S.—Fifteen Years Later. The abominable tyrant, reptile, White Guard and Egyptologist Xerxes was justly executed to-day by our Hero-Brother Artabanus.

J. C. S.

Darkness Deferred

THE winter sun drops at the hour—
Slips over the edge—but a glimpse,
A lingering proof, of his power
Shines on in the face of the Blimps.

A Sculptor's Secret

I AM an old man now—older than I have ever been. But even to-day whenever I see a statue in a public park or museum I smile wryly. Sometimes I take a surreptitious kick at the pedestal. If my friends remonstrate, I kick them. I have good reasons for this attitude. For a brief period, many years ago, I was a sculptor myself.

In 1895 I was living in a second-floor bed-sitting-room in an apartment house in Bubastis Road, West Kensington. I was very happy there. My landlady, a Mrs. Hurlcake, was kindness itself. If she ever wondered about the fair-haired young man with the piercing blue eyes and the handlebar moustache who spent so much of his time staring up the chimney and whistling gems from the operas in a pleasant baritone, she said nothing. With her and with the other lodgers I generally passed as an Italian warehouseman in reduced circumstances. I have no doubt that I might have gone on living there pleasantly enough for the rest of my life. But it was not to be.

It was a habit of mine to spend two or three hours every morning loitering in the vicinity of Battersea Bridge. I

was convinced that sooner or later the bridge would collapse and I was determined to have the satisfaction of not being on it when it did. One morning on returning from my expedition I found that a gigantic block of marble had been left in my room. Whether some wandering stonemason had left it there by mistake, or whether it had always been there and I had simply not noticed it before, I never discovered. There, at any rate, the block was. Nothing very remarkable in that, some people may think. But only a man who has at one time or another had a gigantic block of marble left in his room can appreciate my feelings at that hour.

There were several courses open to me: I could have informed the police; I could have feigned madness; I could have fled the country; I could have ignored the whole thing and hoped that Time, the great healer, might eventually deal with it in his own way. But I did none of these things. I was an imaginative young man, and I had not been staring at the block for more than a couple of hours before the idea occurred to me that if I were a sculptor I could make a marble statue out of it. From this it was not a far cry to the idea that I should become a sculptor.

Just then I heard my landlady's heavy step ascending the stairs. It was the work of a moment to push the marble block out of sight under my bed and to seize razor and shaving-brush. When Mrs. Hurlcake, a stout lady with a glass eye, came in I was busy shaving.

It was absolutely vital that Mrs. Hurlcake should not find out about the block of marble. She had a violent and unreasoning hostility towards all forms of art. She was never tired of telling me how her brother, an amateur photographer, had taken to drink and finally fallen down a well. I knew that if she found me thus trafficking with the enemy I should have to leave the house at a moment's notice and should probably have my luggage flung out after me.

As soon as Mrs. Hurlcake had gone I went out and bought a hammer and chisel. I came back, pulled the marble block out from under my bed, and for a long time stood looking at it. It was now that the first difficulty occurred to me. In the first flush of enthusiasm I had already seen myself a sculptor. Now I saw clearly enough that in order to be a sculptor I should have to make a statue. Furthermore, *it would have to be a statue of something.*

A lesser man might have given up the whole thing in despair at this point. But with bulldog tenacity I hung on. All my former interests and occupations were now forgotten. Instead of staring up the chimney I now stared at the block of marble. I had a recurring dream that I was floating on marble wings over an enormous golf-course, or alternatively that I was wheeling a marble bicycle along the Earl's Court Road. I often wondered whether these dreams had any connection with my new-found interest in sculpture.

Difficult as the situation was, I think that I might eventually have won through to success and produced a statue if it had not been for Mrs. Hurlcake. Sometimes in a fit of abstraction I would rush at the marble block and give it a tap with my hammer or a scrape with my chisel, hoping perhaps that by chance, as it were, a statue might take shape. But whenever this happened Mrs. Hurlcake, whose room was immediately below mine, got up quickly and came upstairs. On several occasions I only just got my block of marble under the bed or into the wardrobe in time. And the fact that I was always shaving when she came in did nothing to quieten her suspicions.

Many a famous sculptor, I imagine, would have found it difficult to work under such conditions. At last my nerves began to give way under the strain. One winter's morning

I leaped from my bed, seized my hammer and dealt blow after blow at the unresponsive marble. Mrs. Hurlcake was on the stairs, but I was past caring. It was only when she actually entered the room and stopped aghast that I lost my head completely. In my panic I sent the marble block crashing through the window to the pavement below, then, grabbing my razor, I crawled under the bed and pretended to be shaving. Had Mrs. Hurlcake not been a woman of uncommon penetration the trick might have worked. As it was, I was given half an hour to leave the house and take my marble block with me.

In a revulsion of feeling I became disgusted with the whole idea of sculpture. My first thought, after I had given my hammer and chisel to a crossing-sweeper, was to get rid of my marble block. After many fruitless attempts to pawn it I at last found a man in Ealing who was willing to exchange it for an iron girder. So it was that from having been a sculptor I became an engineer. But that is another story.



"Single to Blackfriars, and is there a smut on my nose?"

At the Pictures

NOVELS, NOVELS EVERYWHERE

A SOUND, honest, moving film has been made of A. J. CRONIN's novel, *The Stars Look Down* (Director: CAROL REED), and one that gave me at any rate a deep satisfaction—that feeling one so seldom gets from a film, the feeling that it has been genuinely worth while, that in seeing it one hasn't merely been passing the time. Not that this is by any means perfect: the simplified story turns out to be a little too neat. That one of the five miners entombed in a pit accident should be the father and another the brother of the hero, all right; but why should another be the boy he tried (when he was a schoolmaster) to influence not to waste himself as a miner, and another the father of the cheap profiteer who is partly responsible for the accident? The framework of the story in fact is artificial; but the treatment is admirable.

So is the playing. MICHAEL REDGRAVE shows exceedingly well the sincerity, the good nature, the real talent of the young miner who wants to be able to "do something for the men," and the inevitability of his giving in to circumstances. MARGARET LOCKWOOD is good as his selfish, empty-headed little wife; EMLYN WILLIAMS is excellent as the oily, quick-witted, adaptable, unscrupulous *Joe*, the man out to make money. The picture is full of small parts beautifully taken; I must mention EDWARD RIGBY and NANCY PRICE as the father and mother, but there are many others it seems unfair to ignore. The strength of the film nevertheless is in its atmosphere, the authenticity of its detail (its everyday detail, apart from the wonderfully well done and terrifying mine disaster), and that is the province of the director. This is a really fine British film, and makes up for a good many bad ones. I assure you that to see it is an experience worth having.

The week before I'd seen film versions of two other novels. The less well-known novel (by EDITH WHARTON), and possibly the better film, was *The Old Maid* (Director: EDMUND GOULDING); but here the subtleties which I assume must have been in the book are lost, and all we get is a performance of some emotional power but not much depth from BETTE DAVIS, and a good deal of carefully-reconstructed Victorian domesticity. *Charlotte* (Miss DAVIS) and *Delia* (MIRIAM HOPKINS) are cousins; the picture opens when *Delia*, despairing of the return of *Clem Spender* (GEORGE BRENT), is on the

The other novel is *The Light that Failed* (Director: WILLIAM A. WELLMAN). So far as I remember the story—it happens to be the only one of these three novels that I've read, and even that was many years ago—this seems to be a more or less faithful transcription. Parts of the picture are entertaining, but I wouldn't go so far as to say that it was good. I will go so far, indeed, as to say that parts of it are bad.

One great trouble here is that we are able to see *Dick Helder's* alleged masterpiece of painting, with the result that what should be the rending climax (when *Bessie* daubs it out) brings anguish only to that part of the audience that is deeply in sympathy with the hero, and then only on his account. RONALD COLMAN's performance is competent and gentlemanly, but he isn't able to make this part of the audience very large—if indeed any actor could. No; I thought the film patchy and undistinguished, except for the spectacular battle scenes in the Sudan and IDA LUPINO's surprising impressiveness as *Bessie*. What an actor of WALTER HUSTON's merits is doing with the part of *Torpenhow* I can't imagine.



J.H. DOWD

[The Light That Failed]

WOMAN TROUBLE

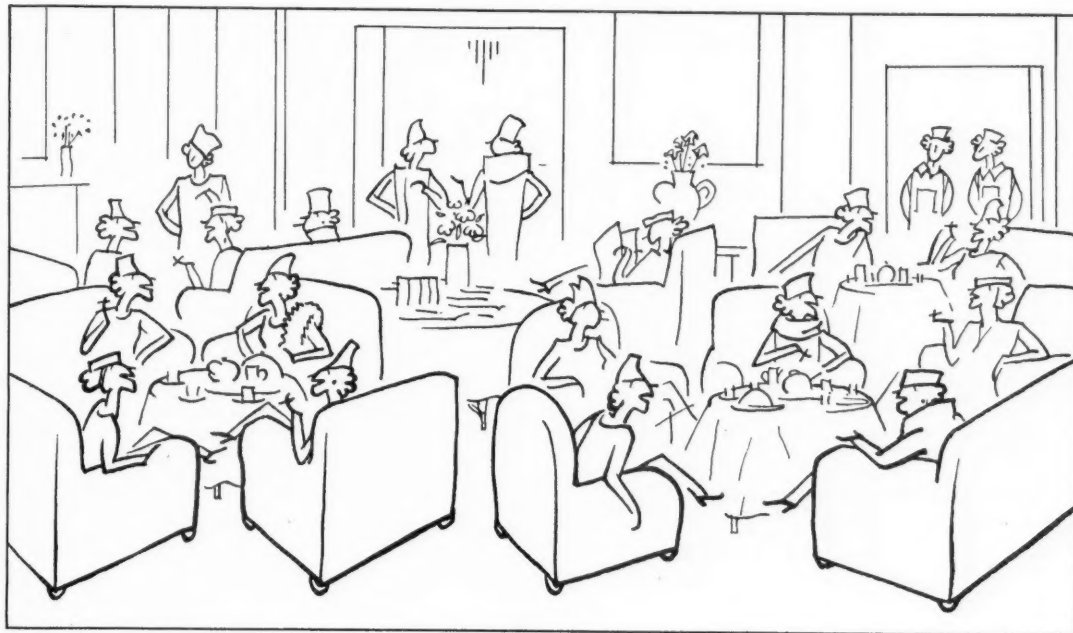
<i>Dick Helder</i>	RONALD COLMAN
<i>Torpenhow</i>	WALTER HUSTON
<i>The Nilghai</i>	DUDLEY DIGGES

point of marrying another. *Clem* turns up on the wedding-day, but *Delia* will not change. He goes off to the war (the Civil War) . . . but *Charlotte* loves him now, and has a child by him. He is killed. The real basis of the story is the antagonism between *Charlotte* and *Delia*, the reason for which is *Delia's* jealousy that *Charlotte* should have had *Clem's* child: but the story is more confusing, I think, than it might be. Even now I haven't mentioned the reason for the title: *Charlotte* behaves like an embittered old maid so that her daughter shall never realise who she is. I didn't enjoy this picture, but I recognise the merits of the acting and the sober, conscientious direction.

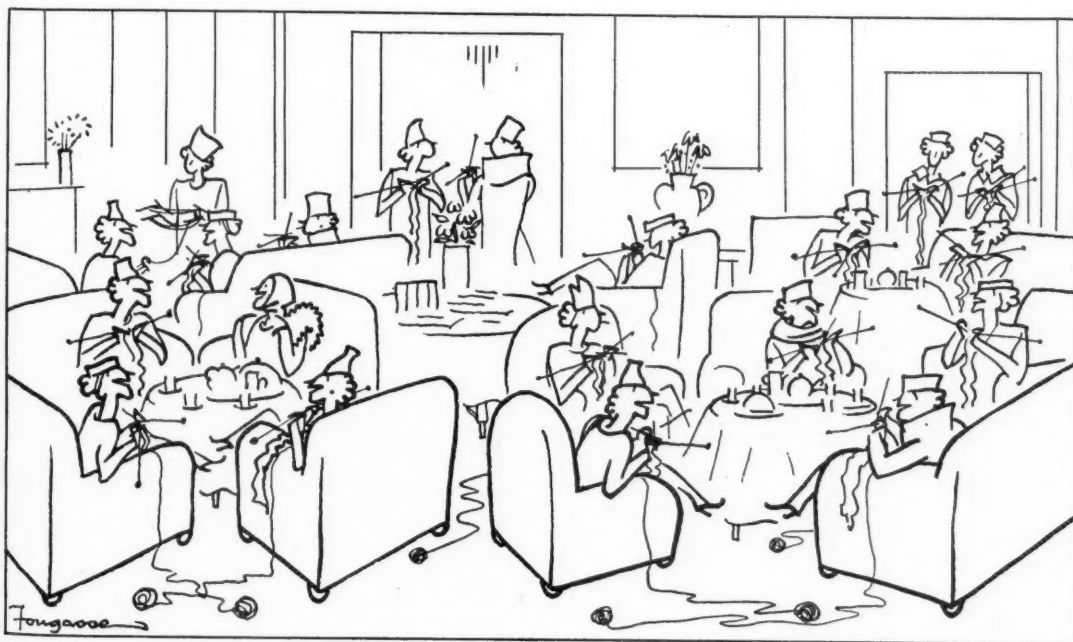
There were two other pictures this fortnight which, though thoroughly unimportant, I found entertaining. One, *Babes in Arms* (Director: BUSBY BERKELEY), is a "musical" with a very young cast; it is notable chiefly for displaying the versatility of MICKEY ROONEY. The picture is lively, tuneful and often funny, and JUDY GARLAND is there too. Then there is *The Housekeeper's Daughter* (Director: HAL ROACH), best described as a crazy gangster film. I'm not sure that the pathetic little halfwit who is the mainspring of the plot really belongs in a work of this sort: but I admit that I enjoyed this absurd story in which ADOLPHE MENJOU and WILLIAM GARGAN are newspaper-men who defeat gangsters with fireworks when they are drunk. JOAN BENNETT (Stop Press: Brunette) is "the housekeeper's daughter." R. M.

THE CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN

XXIII.—THE DISTAFF SIDE



1



2



"When I said 'The war will soon be over' yesterday, Auntie, I didn't mean you to take it quite so literally."

Behind the Lines

XIX.—Class Distinction

HE walked to work on summer days,
On winter days he took the train.
His "Betters" went their busy ways
In motor-cars; but he was fain
To trudge upon his own, or stand,
Strap-hanging, on another's feet—
Not without dust (in summer), and
(In winter) without heat.

And all the time the thing he hates
Is class-distinction's ugly sham;
For class-distinction separates
The automobile from the tram,
And Norman blood from simple trust
That when these class-distinctions go,
Then no one trudges in the dust,
Nor shivers at the snow.

The Revolution came to pass
And ugly class-distinctions went;
With only one surviving class
So much at least was evident;

And "Gentlemen" who took their ease,
"Employers" who employed their wits,
And all "Capitalists" like these
Drove no more to the Ritz.

So "Workers" blessed their lucky star
And hugged this comfort to their souls:
That Stalin had the caviare
And Comrade Hitler had the Rolls,
That Goebbels had the country seat
Where lovely jewelled ladies shone,
That Revolution was complete
And class-distinction gone.

* * * * *

He walks to work on summer days,
On winter days he takes the train.
His "Leaders" go their lordly ways
In motor-cars; but he is fain
To trudge upon his own, or stand,
Strap-hanging, on another's feet—
Not without dust in summer, and
In winter without heat.

A. A. M.

From the Home Front

Easy Sentences for Translation into Finnish (or any other ice-bound language)

ARE there any complaints?
One, two, five, twelve, twenty-six, a hundred and fourteen thousand.

It will not be to our advantage (say, We shall be up to the ankles in it if we have the nerve) to mention any of them. There is ice in the tea, Sir.

How much ice?

A ruddy sight too much ice, if you ask me.

My left boot is frozen to the ground. What a to-do! Now, when I am requested by Sergeant Norstrom to turn to the right, only my right leg will be at liberty to oblige him. He is a hard man. Pray God he does not give the order to turn about.

Look! There are icicles on the Colonel's moustache.

What are you wearing, my friend? I am wearing a vest of wool, a shirt, two pullovers, a leather waistcoat, a jacket, two scarves of unusual dimensions, a greatcoat and a Balaclava helmet; also gloves, socks, boots, pants, Army, and trousers.

What are these pants, Army, of which you speak? May I see them?

Certainly not.

Tell me, is this an officer?

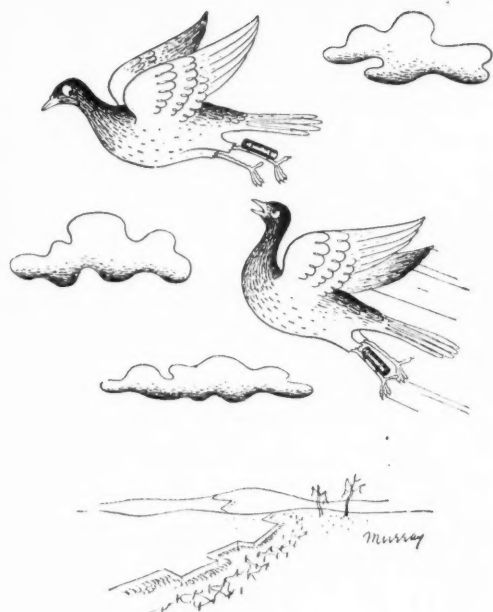
Ye—es.

He wears no pullovers, no leather waistcoat, no scarves and no Balaclava helmet. Is he not cold? Does he perhaps wear the pants, Army?

Hush! It is not respectful to ask questions about the toilette of an officer.

Hallo, Sergeant-Major! I perceive you have been weeping. Allow me to chip away the traces of your tears with this small chisel, without which I never travel.

That chisel should have been returned to the Store this morning, yesterday, the day after to-morrow.



"Get a move on—I've got a message countermanding yours."

At "The Mulberry Tree"

"AND as for rations," sez Sam to me
As we downs our ale at "The
Mulberry Tree,"
"Of course it's only just and right
For everyone to get his bite.

Yes, everyone should get his share;
But what 'a' they been about up there—
Churchill an' Chamberlain an' Gort—
To let the stock o' hams run short?

It's ham as well as beer an' beef
As makes us tough, it's my belief;
Besides all which, I don't deny,
I be wonderful fond o' ham, be I."

"Come, Sam," I sez, "the parsons preach
It's each for all and all for each;
I be shocked at you, I be;
Why, it's Sam for Sam, it seems to me.

You don't hear me complain, not you;
I've something better'n that to do."
"Besides all which, me lad," sez Sam,
"You never have cared that much for ham."

A. W. B.

But it is the chisel of my brother-in-law, Bombardier Smerchov.

You heard me.

I heard you. They heard me. We heard them. He had not heard us. You would have been about to hear them. I shall see you in the Battery Office.

The thermometer has gone down to nine, thirteen, nineteen, twenty-four degrees below zero. All right, then, look at it yourself. Should it not be shaken every night before it is hung outside in the snow? My uncle, who is a doctor, always shakes his thermometer before use.

How that man ever got his stripes beats me.

What! On parade again? May we not have five minutes to get warm before this pleasant stove?

We are on parade. It is good to be out in the snow with one's comrades. The chest swells, the eyes sparkle in the keen air, the hands are held lightly clenched at the sides with the thumbs extended down the seams of the trousers. But the feet are dead. They have died for their country. Noble, noble feet.

Now we are marching. We march towards the South. It is there, then, that the battle will take place? No, we have turned about. We are marching towards the North. No doubt there was an error which has now been rectified. On, then, to the North and Victory. But what is this? Again our Commander has changed his plans. We turn about once more. See, we are running. Much time has been lost and we must hasten. To the South! To the North! South! North! Crikey! [Omit] How much more of this?

Yes, thank you, Sergeant, our feet are quite warm now.

They say that in England, unlike this country, the climate is always temperate.

Oh, yes?

H. F. E.



"Ha'penny fare? Lor', Mum, we gave up ha'penny fares in 1913 . . ."

"Our Member"

IT has come to me with a shock that there are no nice songs about Members of Parliament. No "nice," affectionate songs. English poesy abounds with vague but slighting references to "statesmen" and "politicians." Sir W. S. Gilbert wrote a disrespectful song about the House of Lords. And there is some moving stuff about democracy in the abstract—that memorable piece, for example, in the Socialist Sunday School Hymn Book I bought on the Domain, Sydney, Australia:

"Democracy! Democracy!
Our sordid lives take thou in hand.
Transmute them to a symphony
Of organ-music grand."

But there is no big ditty about the House of Commons as a whole or the Member of Parliament as a character. There are songs about "Squire," "Parson," "Publican," "Varmer," the Blacksmith, the Bobby, the Poacher, and even the Agricultural Labourer—about Jack Tar and Tommy Atkins (what, by the way, is the name of the typical Air Force man?). But there is no old loving song that springs to the mind and lips of the citizen when his Parliamentary representative appears.

This, surely, is a pity, especially at the present time, when we are fighting to defend democracy, of which an important part is the right to elect (and eject) Members of Parliament.

But how should the high theme be treated? We want something which will fix the local legislator as a figure comparable to Tom Bowline or Varmer Giles. This sort of thing, perhaps:

God bless our dear Member—

That surprises you? Well, if you are surprised it shows how real and urgent is the need.

God bless our dear Member, who with such precision
Expresses the feelings of this here division;
For though 'twas one party what gave him the call
To the best of his ability he represents all:

He represents all—

Represents all—

To the best of his ability he represents all.

When trouble descends upon mansion or hut
The poor blighted foreigner must keep his mouth shut;
But that ain't our way in the land of the free—
We write a long letter to our dear M.P.:

To our dear M.P.—

To our dear M.P.—

We write a long letter to our dear M.P.

[NOTE—No harm, I think, in teaching a slight constitutional lesson as well as "building-up" the Member. Let us continue.]

"What ho!" says our Member. "If that ain't hard cheese!"
He puts down a Question as bold as you please;
And all the King's Cabinet gets indigestion
When our representative puts down a Question:

Puts down a Question—

Puts down a Question—

When our representative puts down a Question.

There's comings and goings for days in Whitehall
Until the fine Minister answers and all:

And if the said answer ain't proper and plain
Why, up gets our Member and asks him again!

He asks him again—

Asks him again—

Up gets our Member and asks him again.

[NOTE—"And all." You do not perhaps understand or approve of these words. All right. With iron determination we proceed.]

Remember Joe Larkin, whose lungs were that queer?
Remember the wicked assaults on our beer?
Remember young Bert they was leaving to die
Until our dear Member popped up and asked "Why?"

He popped up and asked "Why?"—

Popped up and asked "Why?"—

You should see our dear Member pop up and ask "Why?"

When up at Westminster his brow he do furrow
With guarding the rights of his County (and Borough).
He don't talk a lot, and we like him for that;
But when they provoke him he answers them flat:

He answers them flat—

Answers them flat—

Yes, when they provoke him he answers them flat.

[NOTE—Who are "they?" Well, it is important that every constituent should conceive his Member as battling single-handed against a vague but vast federation of less beneficial forces.]

"Mr. Speaker!" says he; and we know for a fact
That in a few minutes the Chamber is packed:
The Members come running from smoke-room and street.
Mr. Churchill at once hurries back from the Fleet:

Back from the Fleet—

Back from the Fleet—

Mr. Churchill at once hurries back from the Fleet.

Mr. Chamberlain leaves his pork chop on the plate
To hear what our Member is wishful to state;
And when he sits down at the end of his chat
Every Member's upstanding and waves his top-hat:

Waves his top-hat—

Waves his top-hat—

Every Member's upstanding and waves his top-hat.

And that is the cause why in England's fair clime
The poor working-classes have such a good time:
It don't matter what is the trouble, you see;
They've only to write to their own dear M.P.:

Their own dear M.P.—

Their own dear M.P.—

They've only to write to their own dear M.P.

[NOTE—You don't like that verse so much? All right.]

Thank God our dear Member's respectable too,
And a family man same as Bill, me, and you;
Likewise he is [he's not] wealthy, which don't matter
much,

But [For] look what he done for our football and such:

Our football and such—

Football and such—

Look what he done for our football and such.



POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS—LIFE IN THE CITY

So when you are lying in hoggish repose
Just remember your Member who's still on his toes,
A-marching through lobbies far into the night
To stand for our freedom and fight for the right:

To fight for the right—

Fight for the right—

To stand for our freedom and fight for the right.

And now, I suppose, you will say that all this is "mere wishful thinking." All right. So is *God Save the King*.

A. P. H.

More Light

(By Our Diplomatic Correspondent)

IT is reported on the highest authority that conversations are proceeding in the Embassies with a view to clarification of Rumorian aims in the region of Stensch, where Verelia is asserting her legitimate aspirations. Rumoria's claim to the Stensch Marshes, with their valuable deposits of clay, has never been withdrawn since the abortive *putsch* of 1911.

Circles in close touch with the most influential Rumorian opinion believe that the Stensch problem can soon be

amicably settled. Well-informed quarters in Verelia maintain, however, that a composition is still remote. I have the best possible reason for stating that the quarters are more likely to be correct than the circles.

The essential task, Verelia insists, is the elucidation of Rumorian ambitions. There can be no complete co-operation between the two countries until ideas as to Rumoria's position have reached the initial phase of co-ordination. Rumoria denies the possibility both of clarification and of elucidation until satisfactory guarantees have been given as to the new orientation of Verelian policy in Stensch. A *démarche* is possible.

Official circles in the majority of European capitals are inclined to believe that the germ of a settlement honourable to the two nations is in the air. At the same time there is considerable unofficial scepticism as to the actual intentions of both parties. Until further clarification has been attempted it would be rash to conclude that the epoch of reconciliation and pacific rapprochement has begun. I have unimpeachable authority for declaring that it would be as rash to prophesy success as to forecast failure for the impending diplomatic approaches.

Neutral powers are watching events closely. Moscow and Berlin both blame Great Britain for the impasse. Baron Piano has once more affirmed that Cisalpania will maintain her strength inexorably and to the uttermost, however exhausting may be the national task and duty of waiting to see which side wins.

I. B.



"They're sending the snow plough, Sir. It's only a question of getting the wood to make it, Sir."

Trawlers

["I can tell you that I found not the least evidence that Scottish fishermen have been cowed or demoralised by this inhuman campaign."—Colonel Colville as interviewed by "The Sunday Times."]

DAWN squall raking the harbour, an east wind's whistle,
Sleet on the skerries, the morning barely alight,
And a whisper running along the quays: "The
Thistle—
She hasna come hame the night."

Three little trawlers berthed 'longside the jetty
While the sea-wet fish are flung on the rain-wet stone;
Bruceland, Hope o' the Morning, Annie and Nettie,
But *Thistle's* away—alone.

Men in jersey and sea-boots, smoking and staring,
Saying but little—for what is there left to say?
A skipper shaking his head, a skipper swearing,
And—on with another day.

"Sandy!" says one—and spits—"My ain gude-brither."
"Jock!" says another, "Aye, Jock was a dacent lad."
"Wee bit Alfie—an' wha's t' tell his mither?"
"*Thistle!* . . . It's bad, it's bad."

Never a gun had she, but she sailed undaunted,
Knowing her risk and taking it fair and free.
Mines and Messerschmidts? Havers! the fish were
wanted,
So the *Thistle* put to sea

And went her ways till the Heinkel stooped upon her,
Went her ways till the bombs and the bullets fell . . .
Whispers along the quayside—"Thistle's a goner . . ."
Ah, but she went out well!

Doing her job. Let the tale of her fame go soaring
To those high halls where the sea-lost heroes bide;
And—"Davie! Keep up yer fires an' t' hell wi' Goaring;
We're out wi' the evenin' tide."

Our turn next? And it's no good watching and wishing.
Our turn next? And it's catch as the catcher can.
But—who looks landward? Who forsakes the fishing?
Nobody. Not one man.
H. B.



THE GREAT PROTECTOR

[Field-Marshal Goering has confiscated all property in Poland "in order to safeguard it."]

Mr. PUNCH'S HOSPITAL COMFORTS FUND



IN A GOOD CAUSE

AUDITORS' REPORT

We have audited the books of the "Punch Hospital Comforts Fund" for the period ended 31st December, 1939, with the vouchers relating thereto.

We certify that no expenses of any kind have been charged against the Fund and that all payments have been in respect of materials distributed.

101 Leadenhall Street,
London, E.C.3.
5th January, 1940.

J. H. HUGILL & Co.,
Chartered Accountants,
Hon. Auditors.

YOU are asked to think and to think in good time of the wounded. At any moment their needs may become imperative. They will not consider themselves heroes, they will not complain; they will be those who have neither fallen in action nor come safely through the ordeal, but are part of the reparable human wastage of war; we shall hear them speaking again—the less seriously disabled—in the language long ago familiar to us: "I got my packet at —; I was luckier than some," and yet there will be months of pain in front of them before they can take their place on active service or in civilian life once more.

You are also asked to think of the Navy at sea, the men in the trenches, the men flying, minesweepers, search-light posts, anti-aircraft stations. All are in exposed, cold, wet situations. They need Balaclava helmets, stockings, gloves, mittens and woollen waistcoats for the winter.

Mr. Punch has already distributed large quantities of materials of all kinds, but there is a great deal more to be done. Cold weather has arrived and the need for woollen articles is very urgent. Every penny subscribed will be used for the comfort of the men serving, or Hospital patients, and no expenses whatever will be deducted. Though we know well that these are days of privation and self-denial for all, we yet ask you, those who can, to send us donations, large or small, according to your means; for experience in the last war has proved a hundred times over how urgent is the call and how invaluable is the assistance that can be rendered. Will you please address all contributions and inquiries to: Punch Hospital Comforts Fund, 10 Bouverie Street, London, E.C.4.

Impressions of Parliament

Synopsis of the Week

Tuesday, January 23rd.—Lords: Debate on Rise in Prices and Wages.

Commons: Debate on Road Deaths.

Wednesday, January 24th.—Lords: Debate on News-reel Censorship.

Commons: Various New Bills presented.

Thursday, January 25th.—Commons: Debate on Agriculture.

Tuesday, January 23rd.—In the course of a debate on war economics in the Senior Witan, Lord STAMP made the interesting point that since the beginning of the war prices in America had risen nearly as much as they had here. Our present level of prices therefore bore a reasonable relation to those outside, and so far he saw no sign of the vicious spiral (wages chasing prices and vice versa) which is one of the first danger signals when a national economy is severely strained. We must not, he said, be too pleased with the recovery which had taken place in the export trade; it was not enough. We should all be "export balance conscious," for here was a vital national pulse. As for the control of prices, the Government were keeping a sharp watch on them, said Lord TEMPLEMORE.

The simple barbarians who first thought out the kilt could hardly have foretold that civilisation would bring poison gas in the train of its benefits, and that poison gas would tend to rise

rather than sink. For this reason the kilt is being replaced by battle-dress, though it may still be worn when walking out. Mr. STANLEY told the Commons that only pipers and drummers would receive further issues during the war, but that the War Office had promised that when it was over kilts



THE "HUSH! HUSH!" MAN

MR. VYVYAN ADAMS

would again be available for ceremonial and walking-out. On the whole it is probably a good thing that none of the Whitehall *courtiers* has thought of making a battle-dress in tartan.

Clubs and pubs will be flouting the wishes of the War Office by any segregation of officers and men. Mr. STANLEY was firm about this. Already he seems at home at his new post. When Major CAZALET asked him if he was aware that many soldiers on leave who had only one uniform had to go to bed so that it could be cleaned, he replied that he was prepared to investigate anything which kept soldiers in bed for the whole of their leave.

Mr. VYVYAN ADAMS is anxious for another secret session, but the P.M. said no, and was heartily cheered for doing so.

The CHANCELLOR's long-awaited statement about Old-Age Pension revisions was not debated this afternoon, but his proposals seemed a reasonable compromise in time of war:

(1) Extra allowances paid by Exchequer through the Post Office to old-age pensioners who can prove need. Will relieve local authorities

of public assistance costing over £5,000,000 a year.

(2) Pension at sixty to wives of contributory pensioners of sixty-five or more.

(3) Insured women to get their pensions at sixty instead of sixty-five.

(4) Weekly contributions under contributory scheme increased by 2d. for men and 3d. for women. In each case employers will pay 1d.

The debate on the murderous results of the black-out was opened by Mr. MONTAGUE, who urged the significance of the few fatalities at Salford, where policemen were rigged out as movable lighthouses, as against the appalling increase at such places as Glasgow and Birmingham. He asked for a reduction in the speed-limit, and this Captain WALLACE conceded. After February 1st, he said, it would be 20 m.p.h. in built-up areas. The main cause of accidents was the fact that pedestrians were alone in being unlighted, but there were difficulties in the way of lighting them. He had great hope of the big publicity drive for road safety which the Minister of Information was about to open. (See Mr. P.'s Junior Cartoon.) Later, Sir JOHN ANDERSON rightly warned the House that the black-out must remain in the absence of any grounds for the assumption that air-attack would not develop.

Wednesday, January 24th.—The Paramount news-reel dealing with Miss UNITY MITFORD's return and Mr. HORE-BELISHA's departure has gone off with a much bigger bang than its sponsors can ever have intended.



TANTALIZING, VERY!

Lord STRABOLGI blames the Government for the straits to which news-editors are driven.



"AN OLD REVENUE MAN"

LORD STAMP



"I've come to enq. abt. that well-bt. semi-det. ho. in Lit. Ch. St.—is it fur. or unfur.?"
 "Oh, definitely fur."

Readers of *The Times* are already well-grounded in both sides of the case; this afternoon Lord DENMAN asked the Lords to agree that censorship of news-reels, or at any rate supervision, was necessary in war-time. He had taken the trouble to go to the Paramount Studio, where he had been most kindly received, to check up on his first impressions; and he had found the MITFORD section not only ungenerous in its personal photographs but faked in its background of battleships throwing out smoke-screens and scores of aeroplanes flying in formation. The commentary was full of cheap jokes. As for the other section, from which he quoted, it put the case for Mr. HORE-BELISHA with great bias.

For the Government Lord DUFFERIN entirely agreed with all Lord DENMAN had said about the MITFORD section. It was "sadistic brutality"; but had the Press treated the incident in a way any less reminiscent of the ducking-stool? On the second section he disagreed; it seemed to him fair and not against public policy. For morals and

military information news-reels were already subject to a voluntary censorship. If they were also to be treated to a censorship of taste then logically the same process would have to be applied to the Press. He was much against anything of the sort, for where taste was concerned he believed that the public should be the final judges. But he promised to go into the question of stopping this particular film.

The Commons spent one of their useful but rather domestic days, when those in the Press Gallery feel they are eavesdropping on a happy family.

Thursday, January 25th.—The Liberal Party attacked the Government this afternoon for its handling of Agriculture, Farmer ROBERTS, who led off, concentrating on the shortage of imported feeding-stuffs for animals. Mr. LAMBERT, a National Liberal, was extremely critical. That County War Executive Committees should nearly all consist of six Conservatives and one labourer of unspecified politics was Mr. TOM WILLIAMS' complaint; he has a nose for vested interest, and pointed

it menacingly towards Mr. MORRISON, who, as Minister of Food, defended the Government's cereal policy and promised to keep a watchful eye on prices. Then came the Squire of Churt, more dissatisfied than ever, urging that every scrap of land should be conscribed, a far bigger effort made, and preparations begun for a very long war. A second reply from the Front Bench came from the Minister, who reviewed the situation with hope and made the welcome announcement that the County Committees were to be empowered to give credit to needy farmers. Members of all parties sniffed appreciatively at a tin of patent pig food handed round by Mr. R. C. MORRISON.

o o

"Special - constable — said that at 9.15 p.m. on November 29th he was shining from the second storey of a standing in Hook Road and saw a light house in Hawthorne Terrace 150 yards away."

Local Paper

Noble of him to admit it.

At the Play

"BELIEVE IT OR NOT" (NEW)

So far as I can remember *Lord Richard* harboured no very fell designs in the pantry; a man who had the good sense to take a bath-chair at the Zoo was not the sort to go beyond an innocent deceit. With the prime mover in this comedy it was very different. Hardly had the curtain gone aloft but he was tip-toeing about his master's flat in a way which gave fair warning that the spoons, at the very least, were in danger.

His manner suggested he had retired from the Diplomatic Service especially to crack the crib on hand, and everything about him had an air of quiet costliness except his name, which was *Ford*. His master, *Dick Lawson*, had lately come into a lot of money. Seeing the will in the papers, *Ford* had answered *Janet Lawson's* advertisement for a butler and had written himself a reference which would have got him into the Cabinet. Were there dusty Gainsboroughs in the attic or a packet of bearer bonds forgotten in the medicine chest? you ask yourselves. Neither. *Ford* was a blackmailer—pure and simple I was about to write, but on second thoughts I will not, for you could hunt through the dictionary for days without finding two more unsuitable words for as hard an egg as ever glued his ear to the keyhole of a green baize door.

His chance came quickly, for *Dick*, a solicitor, had to go to Paris to fix up the details of a collusive divorce. Although it seemed highly improbable, *Dick* had never been there before, and so left all the arrangements to *Ford*, who made his reservations both for the journey and the hotel.

In the coupé from Calais he was charmed by his companion, a girl who told him she was travelling for her firm. He had noticed her on the boat, and when she asked if he could recommend an hotel in Paris he was glad that he only knew of one. When they got to it her things were carried by mistake to his suite, and on inquiry they discovered there was not a room

to be had in the whole city on account of the Exhibition. The girl made several gestures of leaving, but he persuaded her to let him sleep on the sofa of the sitting-room, an arrangement which survived several convivial evenings but broke down on the last.

While he was away his wife had been, against his express command, to a farewell party given at Tilbury by a purser friend of hers. Any purser I have known has looked like a marine edition of my bank manager and has shown me photographs of a villa and eight children in the suburbs of Liverpool; but this one wasn't at all like that. He was tremendously hearty and about-town, spoke of "toying with a trout at the Berkeley," and I am sorry to say he didn't bring *Janet* back till breakfast-time. This was too good for *Ford* to miss, and when *Dick* arrived home later in the morning the housekeeping money was already promised. But that was nothing, for as soon as *Dick* and *Ford* were alone, *Ford* broke it to *Dick* that the lady in Paris was—could villainy go further?—his wife. The *Lawsons* were properly in thrall.

I need scarcely add that somewhat undeservedly they wriggled out of it. The wriggling is the weakest part of a comedy which, though bolder in tone than its wit would merit, is light and quite often amusing. As *Ford*, Mr. ROLAND CULVER had much the richest part and earned every line with a delightful performance; if a man must hand me a whisky with one hand and take my savings with the other, then I should plump for Mr. CULVER every time. Miss CORAL BROWNE as *Mrs. Ford*, and Mr. GRIFFITH JONES as *Dick* had the two scenes in Paris, which were the best-written, and did them justice; Miss JUDY KELLY played *Mrs. Dick* with spirit; Mr. BASIL LANGTON was indistinguishable from the pursers you can see any day dallying with an oyster at Claridge's; and Mr. ANTONY HOLLES gave a little sketch of a French room-waiter which I think was the high-spot of the evening. Mr. ALEC COPPEL wrote the play.

ERIC



A GILT FRAME-UP

Dick Lawson MR. GRIFFITH JONES
Madeleine MISS CORAL BROWNE



STREAMLINED BLACKMAIL

Ford MR. ROLAND CULVER
Janet Lawson MISS JUDY KELLY

"The committee recommends the staff be reorganized, that two of its members be reprimanded, and that the staff as a whole be required to sing a declaration of loyalty to the corporation and pledge of co-operation with and assistance to the government."

Canadian Paper.

And in tune, too.



"Oh, dear—could you put it out before the air warden sees it?"

The Jaws of the Land

ALL this talk of territorial waters of South America is interesting to me," said Parker, "because the old gentleman and me 'appened to be mixed up in a argument of that kind in them very waters best part of fifty years ago.

"It was the first ship I served in with the old gentleman—though of course 'e was a young gentleman in them days, but it's 'ard to think of 'im as such. She was 'is first independent command, a gunboat, and about the last paddle-ship ever built for the Navy, 'aving been designed thoughtful for climbing up the rapids of the Yangtse as far as Ichang. As it turned out, whenever she got on them rapids she broke 'er paddles, so they packed 'er up in parcels and posted 'er over to the West Indies, where she wasn't much more use any'ow, be'aving so alarming in a seaway that she 'ad to proceed mostly by the coast, 'anging on to the railings, as it were.

"I don't know whether you know

Concordia Bay on the coast of Parania. The port of Concordia, which is by way of being the capital, is on the bay. At this time it seems that it 'ad never been decided whether the waters of Concordia Bay was in the jaws of the land or whether the three-mile limit of territorial waters was to apply. Oil or the like 'aving been found recent in the country, the Admiralty took into its 'ead to arrange a test case, and the job being just within the sea-keeping qualities of the ship, they sent us down with orders to anchor in the bay about five miles out.

"We 'adn't dropped anchor more than an hour before a boat from the shore pulls alongside. The skipper 'ad put on 'is frock-coat and 'is sword, but 'e might 'ave been in dungarees beside the chap what stepped aboard—'e wasn't 'alf gorgeous. 'E said 'e was Admiral-in-Chief of the Paranian Navy and 'ad come to protest against the violation of the independence of a friendly State. 'E was a nice little chap,

though dark, and it seemed 'e'd been to Eton and 'Arrow and Oxford and the like, and 'e spoke English like a dook, but for a 'abit of bubbling when excited.

"The skipper spoke soothing to 'im and said there must be some mistake, because if 'e'd trouble to check the bearings 'e'd see that we was four and a half mile from the nearest point of land. Any'ow, the skipper said, it was just on lunch-time and maybe 'e'd do 'im the honour to join 'im. The admiral told 'im 'e didn't mind but it 'd 'ave to be without prejudice, and the skipper told 'im there wouldn't be none of that.

"I 'eard about what 'appened after from a pal of mine what was serving at table. After talking of this and that the admiral comes back to our 'aving violated 'is independence.

"Well,' ses the skipper, 'I can't 'old with that reading, but there ain't no dispute about the facts, and you'd better make a protest through the Minister.'

adm
gove
time
with
ener
sina
Tha
six
this
ning
All
pro-
that
Mini
Fina
" "
sma
the
coun
goi
I can
in th
show
" "
ses t
of do
'it m
" "
arran
roun
'er g
Chie
mini
nice
wher
'ad
wasn
whar
I too
at a
ship
short
" "
ses.
with
barre
as so
picke
I've
ain't
to-m
fire at
" "
next
was c
out w
Where
there
bow g
us wi
" "
'e con
trust
like th
gun w
ings a
officer
I'm

"Protests ain't no good," ses the admiral, 'to meet this situation. Your government doing of this at such a time as now shows they ain't in touch with public affairs. Do you know that enemies of our government 'ave assassinated three ministers in a fortnight? That's as many as there should be in six months in a peaceful country like this, and it's a sign the public's beginning to turn against us. And for why? All because we're pro-British. I'm pro-British. So's the Prime Minister, that's my brother. So's the Foreign Minister, that's me again. So's the Finance Minister, that's my uncle.

"And now you come and moor 'ere smack in the middle of the bay, and all the rebels are saying as we've sold the country to the British. 'Ow we're going to get over it I don't know. All I can see is, I'll 'ave to come out 'ere in the navy and fire at you, so as to show we're serious.'

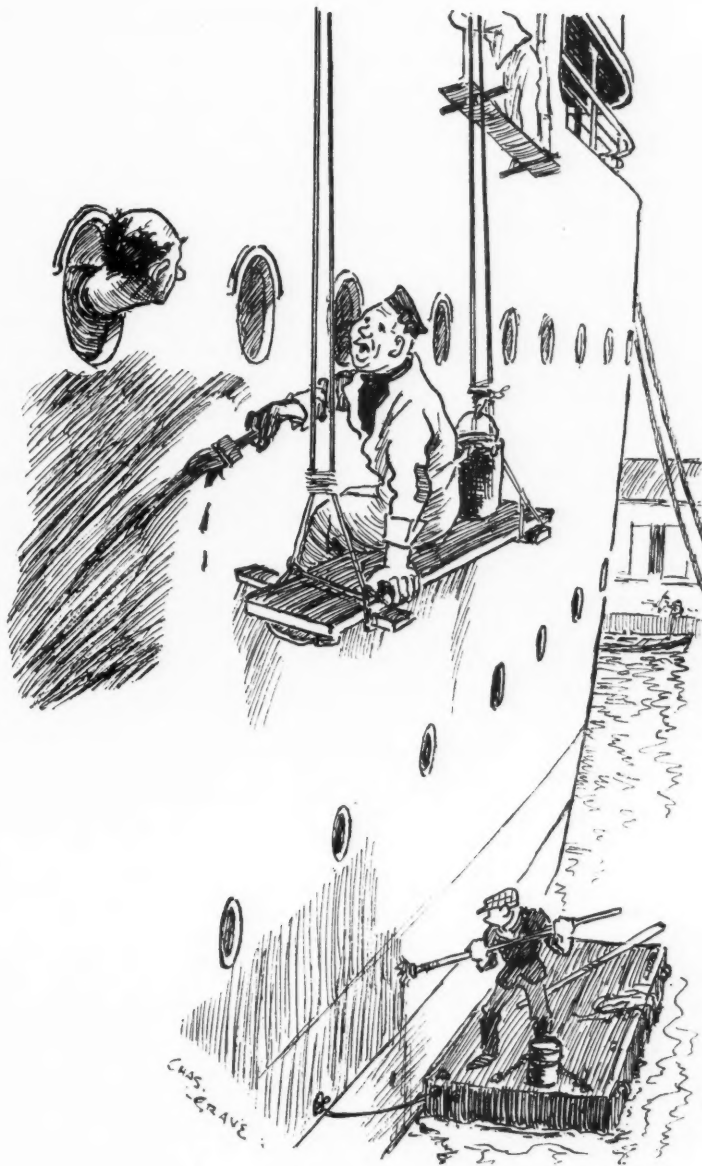
"I'm a peace-loving man myself," ses the skipper, 'but if you're thinking of doing that I'd advise you not to 'it me.'

"No," ses the admiral, 'I think I can arrange that easier than the other way round. What's worrying me is getting 'er going. You see, our Engineer-in-Chief is a Swede working in one of the mining companies, and though 'e's very nice about getting the engines going when we 'ave naval dinners aboard, 'e 'ad it put in 'is contract that 'e wasn't to be asked to take 'er orf the wharf. Then there's lubricating oil. I took the chance of selling our stock at a very good price to a Prince Line ship last week what 'appened to be short.

"There's only one thing for it,' 'e ses. 'You'll 'ave to land a engineer with a couple of men and two or three barrels of oil at that point over there as soon as it's dark and I'll 'ave them picked up. I'll go back now and say I've give you a ultimatum that if you ain't took yourself orf by ten o'clock to-morrow the navy will come out and fire at you.'

"Sure enough, about ten o'clock next morning the Paranian Navy, what was called the *Libertad*, come steaming out with a list of about fifteen degrees. When she was about 'alf a mile orf there was a 'ell of an explosion at 'er bow gun and soon a boat come orf to us with the admiral.

"I'm glad that's over," 'e ses when 'e come aboard. 'You can't always trust them guns to burst at the breech like that. Last time we fired the stern gun with shell she pulled orf 'er mountings and smashed back through the officers' quarters. Now it's all fixed up. I'm 'aving it announced that the



"Meself, I'm a pre-Raphaelite."

British Government, 'aving been impressed by the courage and vigour of the Paranian Navy, 'as agreed to a treaty saying as they won't bring their ships nearer in than three miles orf-shore in Concordia Bay without giving notice formal. You will 'ave to come into 'arbour now and take part in the rejoicings. And you'll 'ave to arrange to stay 'ere some days because your

engineer tells me that there Swede of ours ain't been doing 'is job proper and I want your people to do a over'aul.

"You'll 'ave to 'elp me over that gun, too. I got it covered up now, but it's got to be got right for firing salutes for the President's birthday next month. 'E's my father and 'e don't 'alf carry on if anything goes wrong about things like that.'" A. M. C.

Autopsy on Albion

The Truth at Last: And How I Got It

WHAT is going on there? What do the people think? How tall are they? Have they enough to eat? When will the strain begin to tell? Is there a doctor in the house? Where is Sir Hugh Walpole?

It was to answer these questions, and others no less absorbing, that I crossed the English frontier on a mission of which the purpose and results can now be revealed for the first time. I am (as you may have guessed) a Distinguished Neutral Observer. As for my mission, it is starkly limned in the telegram which gave me my marching orders:

CAN YOU UNDERTAKE EXPEDITION BRITAINWARD OFF-TEAR VEIL EXENIGMA THAT IS WARTIME ENGLAND STOP ESSENTIAL YOU RUB SHOULDERS WITH MEN AYE AND WOMEN TOO OF ALL CLASSES AGES SIZES SHAPES UPDOWN LENGTHBREADTH THESE WARVRACKED HUNGERMENACED ISLES COMMA SHARING THEIR FRUGAL FARE PROBING THEIR TROUBLED HEARTS FINALLY PRESENTING THOUSANDS TRUTHSTARVED READERS WITH FIRST VIVID INTIMATE FIRSTHAND UPTODATE IMPARTIAL EXPERT ANALYSIS OF WHAT WAR MEANS TO BRITONS STOP DO YOU SEE WHAT WE MEAN STOP PUNCH.

It was in answer to that terse summons that I entered British territory after crossing a stretch of water which (for we Neutral Observers have our code) shall be nameless. Within less than an hour I was sitting, just like an ordinary passenger, on the boat-train to London. The train seemed to be running normally; engine in front, then the carriages one behind the other, and a typical English guard's van bringing up the rear. Everything was as in peace-time—on the surface; but I was not interested in the surface. I found some pretext to go into the corridor and, when the guard came round to inspect the tickets, I stumbled and fell heavily against him.

"Forgive me, old cock," I said, slipping easily into the vernacular, "I am a clumsy fellow."

He replied in a not unkindly tone: "If I was you I should lie down in here, Sir. It's an empty compartment."

"Thanks," I said. "By the way, how is your rolling-stock? Feeling the strain, eh? Many serious accidents? Much toll of life?"

His jaw dropped, a look of apprehension settled on that honest English face. "I should just lie quiet, Sir," he said in a forced, unnatural voice. As he left the compartment he glanced back at me over his shoulder; and if ever I read alarm in a man's eyes I read it then.

You may take it from me that all is not well with the much-vaunted British railway system.

Yet it was another and a less dramatic encounter that remains the most vividly etched on my memory. I was back in my original compartment. Opposite me, with her small child, sat a youngish woman in a fur coat: a member of the formerly prosperous middle-class. It had been a good fur coat once, but that two-inch tear in the lining told its tale. She was doing her best—her poor, proud, gallant best; but you can't fool a Neutral Observer. That rent, tiny though it was, meant a gap in England's defences. I think she must have read my thoughts, for presently she drew the fur coat about her knees, concealing the tear.

It was a little later that she spoke to me.

"I suppose," she said (and there was more than diffidence in her voice; there was a certain shame)—"I suppose you haven't by any chance got the time on you?"

I had. I told her what it was. The smile with which she thanked me was tremulous, pathetic. I had not the heart to ask her what had happened to her watch.

The British middle-class is going under. It will keep up appearances to the end. Do not underestimate its strength. But it is doomed. Its knell was sounded when a young mother asked me for the time of day.

London! London in war-time! What would I find there? Starvation or plenty? Order or chaos? Sparta or Babylon? I was soon to know.

I would have known even sooner but for a good-natured altercation with the taxi-driver whom I chartered at a certain strategic railway terminus. He objected to my sitting beside him in the front of his cab, invoking all kinds of regulations of which I had never heard and finally demonstrating to me that there was in any case nothing to sit on. I gave way with a good grace but not without chagrin, for we Neutral Observers get eighty per cent. of our information from taxi-drivers and, although you can carry on a conversation from inside the cab, there is nothing that makes it so difficult to lay bare the soul of a nation as the back of a taxi-driver's neck. The wince, the grimace, the wry smile, the look of incredulity—all these are lost; it becomes virtually impossible to tear the veil off anything.

Still, I did my best. As we crept through inky streets I called to him:

"What about Russia?"

"Eh?" he countered, playing for time.

"What about Russia?" I repeated.

"Oh, Russia. What about it?"

"That's what I am asking you, my good man," I insisted.

"Asking me?" he prevaricated. "Why?"

And so the duel of wits went on, until my Cockney Jehu deposited me at my hotel. He had refused to be pinned down; the nearest he allowed me to get to his personal opinion about Russia was a blunt refusal to drive me there.

But his evasions told me a very great deal—I will pass it on to you. *The man in the street in England is scared to talk about Russia.* Significant? Well, what do you think?

I dined that night in the gilded heart of London's pleasure-zone. The head-waiter, an old friend of mine, had the tact not to recognise me.

"Not been called up yet?" I chaffed him.

"Oh, no, Sir," he responded with a knowing chuckle.

"I am over fifty. Besides, I am an Italian."

The wine-waiter, a Greek in the middle-forties, had not been called up either.

Take a tip from me. Don't underestimate the British reserves of man-power.

The dinner was not bad. An observer less distinguished than myself would probably have called it excellent. But remembering the shot I found in my lobster soufflé I feel bound to suggest that *recent estimates of the British crustacean-potential should be taken with a grain of salt.*

The scene in the restaurant was a gay one, outwardly. But many of the men, and even some of the women, were in soul-destroying khaki. What struck me most vividly was the absence of evening dress. Intrigued, I found occasion to stumble heavily against a fellow-diner who was passing my table.

"Not in tails to-night, I see," I said quizzically.

The man, an elderly, well-set-up reactionary, rounded on



"Never again will I let my house furnished to a troupe of midgets."

me—his face was purple. I veritably believe he would have struck me had not his female companion restrained him. "Come on, George. We shall be late," she urged.

A trifling incident? Nothing much to go on? Perhaps. But at that moment, amid the hectic laughter, the popping of corks, the martial blare of "Run, Rabbit, Run," I seemed to feel the jungle closing in on the British Empire.

It was nearly midnight. My shoulders were sore with rubbing. A young airman had confirmed, with reckless insouciance, the rumours that R.A.F. machines, though they can turn to the left easily enough, cannot turn to the right. A small pale man, who looked absolutely fagged out and said he was in the Secret Service, had made an appointment with me behind the Foreign Office and borrowed half-a-crown. I could not help smiling to myself as I sat there incognito, watching, listening, analysing, missing nothing. Little did those war-time revellers imagine how much was being revealed to the solitary figure in the unobtrusive frock-coat, seated immediately under the band! . . .

I rose to leave. I needed sleep and my appointment behind the Foreign Office was for 7.30 in the morning. At that moment someone stumbled heavily against me.

"Hello! Go easy!" I laughed.

"Pardon," said the individual, whose appearance was respectable but nondescript. "Do you expect trouble in the Middle East?"

"Yes," I answered promptly, "and no."

"The break-up of family life consequent upon evacuation," rapidly continued the stranger. "How far has it gone?"

"Far enough," I countered, keeping him in play. "Tell me, how does rationing affect the womanhood of Britain?"

Before he could reply we were both stumbled heavily against from behind. I lost my balance and fell, striking my head against a typical British stockbroker at the next table and losing consciousness.

As I went under I realised that no fewer than three unobtrusive individuals were asking what my war aims were. At that moment I should have had no difficulty in formulating them. I had had enough of Distinguished Neutral Observers.

(WORLD COPYRIGHT RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART FORBIDDEN. AND DON'T DARE SET IT TO MUSIC, EITHER.)
P. F.

Ah, the English!

MOVING with the times, one no longer says to one's neighbours on meeting them: "How are you?" or "Isn't it a wet day?—though not, I think, quite as wet as it was yesterday and the day before." One says instead: "And how is your A.R.P. getting on?" or "What are you doing about your butter ration? How difficult it all is—though not of course as difficult as the question of income-tax."

Replies, naturally, vary. Miss Plum, for instance, is consistently bright and has been so all along. It is known, through her great friend Miss Dodge, that she feels it a duty and means to stay bright up to the very end.

Old Lady Flagge usually has some rather sharp criticism to offer about the whole conduct of the war, and it is sometimes difficult to tell from her manner *on whose side she really is*—unless the word Nazi is actually mentioned, when the terms that she has been using

about our own Cabinet are seen to mean practically nothing whatever.

Miss Littlemug's views on petrol-rationing, evacuated children and—still more—de-evacuated children, interesting to a degree, are yet apt to take up rather more of the morning or afternoon than one is perhaps able to spare—as Cousin Florence expressed it when Laura asked her why she looked like that and was it the beginning of a sharp go of influenza?

But Mrs. Battlegate, when one met her in the Post Office in connection with Wool for the Navy, reacted perhaps more strongly than anybody else.

"It is the *General*," said Mrs. Battlegate, always sonorous and now sad as well, so that one was irresistibly reminded of the tolling of some great bell. "It is the *GENERAL* about whom I am so deeply distressed."

Laura said: "More than about Hitler?" in a rather *sotto voce*, and one frowned at her rapidly before

turning a look of interested sympathy upon poor Mrs. Battlegate.

"Those with whom the General is working at our A.R.P. offices are in many ways difficult. As the General himself says, he finds it practically impossible to co-operate satisfactorily with the Chief Constable, or the local police, or our own air-raid wardens—Mr. Pledge and Mr. Pancatto, or the military authorities, or even the very inadequate office help with which he has been provided."

"Oh, dear!" said Laura.

"I cannot tell you," said Mrs. Battlegate, "what Mr. Pledge has been like over the distribution of the gas-masks for Bottle-St. Barnaby."

She did, however, tell us, and it seemed almost as though Mr. Pledge had been like Machiavelli, Stalin, Nero and the Hound of the Baskervilles all rolled into one.

"Mr. Pancatto," pursued Mrs. Battlegate, "being a so-called writer, has



"... and in 'er letter she says she's almost forgot what I look like."

always
from th
perfect
able, a
comple
in the
that f
has p
Genera
hopeles
thing r
But,
detaini
to the
Betw



"It be wonderful, Ma'am, how they camofoliage them guns in France."

always been difficult. The General, from the very start, knew that he was perfectly certain to turn out unreliable, argumentative, pig-headed and completely inefficient. Without being in the least prejudiced, one realised that from the very beginning. It has proved *more than true*. The General quite feels that it would be hopeless to attempt to have anything more to do with Mr. Pancatto. But," said Mrs. Battlegate, "I am detaining you. Let me walk with you to the cross-roads."

Between the Post Office and the

cross-roads one learned of the extraordinary behaviour of the Chief Constable, the lack of even elementary common-sense displayed by the local police, and the very serious differences of opinion that divided General Battlegate from Miss Pin, his voluntary helper in the A.R.P. office.

"The General fears that Miss Pin must go," said Mrs. Battlegate.

"It's like the 'Ten Little Nigger Boys,'" Laura exclaimed, but Mrs. Battlegate took no notice.

She only said that the General was working at high pressure and doing a

very great deal that, properly speaking, he ought *not* to be doing at all.

"Do you mean really *actionable* things?" Laura asked, and one pushed her sharply in the side and covered the remark by inquiring where, exactly, had the pursuit of duty taken the General at the moment?

"He has gone," said Mrs. Battlegate, "to High Ham to try to adjust a quarrel between two of his A.R.P. officials. It can hardly be said to come within his province, but he has gone willingly. In a time like this, he says, we must all pull together." E. M. D.



"Everyone seems to think they know everything to-night."

Sharing the Kitty

(A shortage of kittens is reported in London)

WITH prodigal Government waste and gigantic expenses,

With growing demand from the Air and the Navy and Gort,

The fact becomes painfully clear to a man in his senses

That one way or other civilians may have to go short;

Our wool, for example, is wanted for sweaters and mittens,

Our Forces, exposed to the weather, are avid for fats,

But London has heard with surprise of a shortage of kittens

Which turn into cats.

Last autumn, it may be, the tabby got jumps and departed,

And now in retirement pursues her accustomed career,

Which means, I suppose, that there's many a family started

In rural surroundings which normally ought to be here;

It may be that some, when the male of the species got fewer,

Sped forth to the shires, where romance was more like to be met,

While many a basketed portly but portable mews

Was borne to the vet.

Or look at it this way. Our cats when producing a litter

Were used to retaining some one in a dozen or so;

They seemed to accept it without getting hardened or bitter

And not to care twopence for where the eleven might go;

But now, with the mistresses looking both sides of a penny,

They fear for the loss of the last, which would leave them alone,

And sourly decide to be hanged if they'll bother with any:
Not like them, I own.

But what's to be done, after all, is the practical question;

Needs must, as no doubt you're aware, when necessity drives;

The Government seems to be barren of fruitful suggestion
While knowing the mice will be having the time of their lives;

A truce to discussion; away, theoretical fallacies;
There's only one method of solving the problem, and that's

A Ministry, housed in the best of available palaces,
For rationing cats. DUM-DUM.

o o

"Deputy Chief Constable R. Howard, of Salford, at the close of a case at the Salford City Police Court to-day, when three men pleaded guilty to stealing a quantity of scrap lead from the Lead Seal Manufacturing Co., of Percy Street, Pendleton, asked for a witness's fee to be disallowed."—*Manchester Paper*.

Too much lead?



The second horse

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

A Family of Substance

It used to be said of *The Locks of Norbury* (MURRAY, 18/-) that the indiscretions of a GUELPH or a BOURBON were responsible for their wealth and distinction, if not for their beauty; and that some such recondite source accounted for their new mansion in Surrey where they gave (as FANNY BURNEY put it) "what parties! How select, how refined, though sportive!" Yet the Duchess of SERMONETA, at the outset of an unusually attractive family chronicle, assigns to an opulent M.P. of Grimsby the surreptitious credit of founding her grandmother's family. This done, she flings open *Norbury*, like a big dolls'-house, and reveals the domestic activities of her ancestors from 1774 onwards. The Locks did not always remain in Surrey. Times decayed; and CHARLES—married to Lord EDWARD FITZGERALD's half-sister—became Vice-Consul at the Naples of FERDINAND "Big Nose," and broke himself and his career in a vain stand against the HAMILTONS and NELSON. Other and happier members of the family reaped on the Continent the reward of their kindness to eighteenth-century émigrés. One and all are fortunate in the grace, skill and enthusiasm that have so brilliantly renewed their chequered lease of life.

Fathers, Our Fathers!

The literature of paternal humbugs must acknowledge a notable addition in *Mr. Nicholas, hero of Children, My Children!* (SECKER AND WARBURG, 7/6). He has many points of resemblance to *Mr. George Pontifex*. They were both rich, short-tempered and epicures. They were both as sure that in them fatherhood had reached perfection as they were convinced that their children were the most ungrateful ever palmed off by thoughtless nature on a good and patient man; but whereas SAMUEL BUTLER allowed no breath of scandal to approach *Mr. Pontifex*, Mr. PETER DE POLNAY gives his hero an epic private life and takes the lid off it without reservation. The children are drawn with a sympathy as keen as the merciless satire which envelops their parent; they live an odd sad life in an exotic Italian villa until *Mr. Nicholas's* momentous attempts to direct the course of the last war bring them to Switzerland. This is a clever and funny novel, too much out of the ordinary to be popular but likely to be greatly cherished by a few for the wit of its malice and for its unsentimental insight into the imagination of children.

Tunisia and Libya

North Africa has recently receded from the foreground of the political scene, but Mr. G. L. STEER fears that it will



Mistress (to general, who has been sent on an errand). "YOU ARE VERY LATE, MARY."

Mary. "WELL, MUM, THE BUTTER QUEUE GOT MIXED UP WITH THE 'IPPERDROME QUEUE, AN' BEFORE I KNEW IT I WAS SWEE' IN."

George Morrow, February 6th, 1918

return to prominence. His chatty book, *A Date in the Desert* (HODDER AND STOUGHTON, 15/-), describes a long but hasty journey through Tunisia and Italian North Africa. He visited the rival fortified lines—two of the many which disfigure our planet and may ultimately challenge the canals of Mars. He encountered people of all races and classes and easily drew from most of them their innermost thoughts. The interest of the book, however, lies less in its political gossip than in Mr. STEER, for he is a feast in himself. Tireless, inquisitive and sceptical, he races on by any means of transport he can find, giving all the time a lively account of the scenery, antiquities, flora and fauna. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and from an easy chair we can share his exhilaration. He is not free from careless writing, but at his best, as in his description of the Spanish refugees at Cillium, he reaches a very high level.

Wanted: A Magnanimous Aristocracy

A dictator who believes that the rule of a self-denying élite is in the long run best for everybody, Dr. ANTONIO SALAZAR well deserves the extended attention that an English translation of his speeches should command. At

a time too when "sacrifice" is the universal cry, it is interesting to trace the course of a politician who has continually urged constructive economies on a very poor and disvelled country. On the critical side *Doctrine and Action* (FABER AND FABER, 10/6) stresses the fact that democracy takes very little account of the dignity and security of the ordinary home, and tends to throw up a governing clique of plutocrats who do not even care for production but only for dealings arising out of it. The industrial rule of quantity rather than quality acts, Dr. SALAZAR maintains, not only as "a real impoverishment of society" but as an economic menace; and economic menaces leading to war bulk largely in the most recent and most interesting of these addresses. There is, however, a grateful stress on the value of the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance, welded not only by common colonial interests, but by a mutual solicitude for the survival of civilised Europe.

King Monmouth

Yet another of those unfortunate crosses between the historical novel and biography proper, *Cry Treason* (DAVIES, 10/6) relates, with a bias which readers equally but perhaps differently biased will find engaging or infuriating as the case may be, the story of JAMES, Duke of MONMOUTH. The book has two titles to respect and admiration. Its author, Miss IRIS MORLEY, makes no pretence of impartiality and her material reconstruction of her era is both recherché and imaginative. But she does not seem to have got inside the skins whose surface panoply she so brilliantly describes. Her more or less "nice" women—MONMOUTH'S ANNA and HENRIETTA WENTWORTH—lecture like high school mistresses; their opposite numbers—if one excepts a charming FRANCES STUART—are conventional wantons or scolds; while the men—even SHAFESBURY, over whom exceptional pains have been taken—seem unduly inspired by the later historical considerations voiced in an extremely interesting "Postscript." This postscript, so much more attractive than the novel, leaves you regretting that its writer did not give herself the pains of constructing a real case for her hero against his wicked uncles, CHARLES and JAMES, instead of portraying a princely babe in a wood of avuncular intrigue.

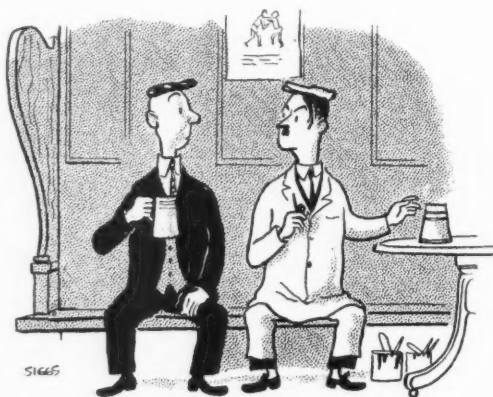
A Novel for the Wideawake

The reader who would fully enjoy Princess BIBESCO's new novel, *The Romantic* (HEINEMANN, 8/3), should give it his most wideawake attention, for her delicate strokes of wit and hair-fine lines of epigram are not always very easy to discern. The story itself is the old and fundamentally

rather silly one of the childless wife who takes a lover in order to provide her cherished husband with an heir, but such is the sickly charm of Princess BIBESCO's romantic heroine Lisa—English in spite of her name, but, having been married to a Pole, more foreign than any foreigner—that the reader is slow in realising that this is all there is to it. Nor is it really all, for here are two or three characters who have the breath of life in their nostrils, much scintillating if rather bewildering talk, and any amount of such wisdom as this comment on the reticence of a brilliant talker: "Being able to say anything she was also able not to say anything she did not wish to say."

Tavern Mystery

By no means the least notable feature of *Death at the Bar* (COLLINS, 7/6) is Miss NGAIO MARSH's wise selection of the visitors who assembled at the "Plume of Feathers." Abel Pomeroy was the landlord of this Devonshire inn, and while acting as host under extraordinary circumstances to a distinguished barrister, a popular actor, a well-known painter, two detectives from Scotland Yard, an ardent Communist, and a very eccentric Irish lady he proved himself both shrewd and tactful. This tale provides as pretty a problem as any set during recent years. Apart from a rather too generous amount of dialogue, Miss MARSH makes no glimmer of a mistake, and her policemen deserve special words of mention.



"Of course it's a false one—but you'd be surprised at the number of jobs I get on the strength of it."

Adroit Detection

Although it is reasonable to suppose that our supply of detective stories must at least be equal to the demand, a cordial welcome, nevertheless, awaits the two tales that are included in M. GEORGES SIMENON's *Maigret Travels South* (ROUTLEDGE, 8/3). In each of these yarns, ably translated from the French by Mr. GEOFFREY SAINSBURY, M. SIMENON's investigator gives a capital exhibition of observation and deduction. But neat as his performance is in "Liberty Bar" he gives a more impressive display in "The Madman of Bergerac." Glued to his bed on account of a wound, *Maigret* gave no rest to the officials of Bergerac, and the record of his exploits makes most attractive reading.

One of the new Penguin Books is by Low: *Europe Since Versailles*, a History in One Hundred Cartoons with a Narrative Text. Each cartoon has a page to itself, with a few words opposite linking it with the one before. This is the liveliest possible history of Europe since 1919, and even the Penguin Books never gave better value for sixpence.

NOTICE.—Contributions or Communications requiring an answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed Envelope or Wrapper.

The entire Copyright in all Articles, Sketches, Drawings, etc., published in PUNCH is specifically reserved to the Proprietors throughout the countries signatory to the BERNE CONVENTION, the U.S.A., and the Argentine. Reproductions or imitations of any of these are therefore expressly forbidden. The Proprietors will, however, always consider any request from authors of literary contributions for permission to reprint.

CONDITIONS OF SALE AND SUPPLY.—This periodical is sold subject to the following conditions, namely, that it shall not, without the written consent of the publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price of 6d.; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade: or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.